



## Washington State Department of Agriculture

PO Box 42560  
Olympia, Washington 98504-2560  
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Contact: Mike Louisell (360) 902-1813

### **\$3.3 million in federal grants boost Washington's specialty crops**

**OLYMPIA** - The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) received word today that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has approved the state's application for \$3.3 million in grant funding for projects to support the state's fruit, vegetable and horticulture growers. The 2012 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant will fund 25 projects managed by the department and other Washington organizations to benefit the third largest specialty crop industry in the nation. Awards for individual projects range from \$26,000 to \$250,000.

"These federal dollars will help us support innovation, jobs and profits for a large percentage of Washington-grown products," said Gov. Chris Gregoire. "The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, authorized under the 2008 Farm Bill, is a great tool to help enhance the sustainability of Washington agriculture. We must have the Farm Bill renewed and include funding for specialty crops in future years."

"These projects strengthen the capacity of our diverse agricultural producers to manage some of their most pressing needs to help ensure the vitality of Washington's \$7.9 billion agriculture industry," said WSDA Director Dan Newhouse. "As we evaluated the many worthy proposals, we selected projects that were most likely to address pest and disease control, agricultural promotion, and research projects geared toward innovation in farm practices."

Commodity commissions, agricultural associations, Washington State University and WSDA programs will receive grant funds. Project work is to be completed from one to three years. Examples include projects that will: encourage consumers to purchase commodities ranging from apples to nursery plants, improve irrigation practices and support small-scale growers' efforts to sell at farmers markets. A full list of projects is available on the WSDA grant program website at <http://agr.wa.gov/Grants/SCBGP>.

The federal block grant program was designed to provide grants to states solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture. Additional information is available on the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service website at [www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp).

In awarding these funds, WSDA selected projects that build on the expertise and success of the industry, make a meaningful contribution to the viability of fruit, vegetable and horticulture production and have the potential to support the largest number of producers. Projects that included matching funds or in-kind donations by the applicant were given priority.

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WSDA conducted a competitive solicitation process to award the funding. Earlier this year, WSDA received 77 pre-proposals requesting funding in excess of \$12 million. After reviewing 40 full proposals, a 13-member industry review panel selected the most promising projects for inclusion into the state's single grant application. USDA has approved Washington's application, clearing the way for the projects to move forward.

WSDA received more than \$13 million over the past five years for projects supported by the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Only California and Florida have received higher funding levels. Future funding opportunities are dependent on the 2012 Farm Bill, currently pending authorization by Congress.

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